United Nations A/HRC/37/NGO/21

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 February 2018

English only

**Human Rights Council**
**Thirty-seventh session**
26 February-23 March 2018
Agenda item 3
**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

# Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.18-01579(E)
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# 30 Years After the war, Landmines still Kill and Maim Civilians In the Islamic Republic of Iran

It has been three decades since the end of the 8-year Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), however, border landmines still take civilian lives. Men, women and children living in regions or even the frequent travellers fall victims to the 30-year old buried danger. This is why every once in a while reports about mine explosions in those Iranian regions hit the headlines in domestic newspapers.

The most recent mind blast was reported in December 4, 2017 in which an anti-tank mine[1] explosion left two women and one man killed. In October 2017, another mine blast in a western Iranian province on Iran- Iraq border killed one person and injured two other people who were serving in demining services in the region.[2] In another incident the same month, an Iranian soldier was killed in a mine explosion near the western Saqqez city. Three months earlier, domestic news outlets had reported death of four military personnel as a result of a mine blast in Kordestan province.[3]

Islamic Republic of Iran is among those countries with the highest contamination with landmines, with millions of mines still hidden under the ground. Some sources have estimated that there are 16 million mines hidden in the country border regions, making the country rank the second in the world in terms of mine contamination. Five border provinces in the west and southwest, namely, Kordestan, Kermanshah, Khuzestan, Ilam, and West Azerbaijan are still plagued with mines that have remained from the war with Iraq. According to official figures released in 2007, the area of lands contaminated with mines and other forms of unexploded ordnance remained from the war with Iraq are as follows: 1.38 million hectares in Khuzestan province, more than 400,000 hectares in Ilam province, 1,480 hectares in Kordestan province, 691,000 hectares in Kermanshah province, and 59,000 hectares in West Azerbaijan province.[4]

**Mines, the legacy of Iraq invasion**

Hossein Arian, who is a military analyst, in an interview with "Iran without Landmines Institute, has noted that Iraq had advanced weapons during the war, and took advantage of modern military technology. "Islamic Republic of Iran, however, lacked those weapons. Therefore, to prevent attacks by our country, which were usually carried out using the human wave tactic, Iraq had planted as many mines as it could along its borders with Islamic Republic of Iran,[5]" he added.

The analyst maintained that border regions in those Iranian provinces which neighbor Iraq are among "the most dangerous regions in the world" and demining activities going on in those regions have so far claimed the lives of a great number of Iranian military personnel and specialists. Although Islamic Republic of Iran started removing mines from border regions immediately after the war ended, but demining activities are still ongoing about three decades following the end of war.

According to the analyst, there are three reasons why demining the border regions has taken so long. The first reason is that Iraq had not mapped those regions where mines were planted and, therefore, there are no maps of landmines to expedite demining operations. Secondly, even if there were such maps, it must be noted that mines usually move along the layers of earth in the course of time. The third problem facing the country in this regard is lack of necessary technical facilities and equipment. During all the years that have passed since the end of the Iraqi imposed war, absence of new technologies and advanced demining equipment has caused those mines, which are leftovers of the Iraq invasion, to incur great loss of life on the Iranian nation. In the absence of modern demining equipment, Iranian military collects mines manually and many members of military as well as civilian forces have lost their lives doing this. Some

1 http://yon.ir/pS5C1
2 http://yon.ir/8q5ZQ
3 http://yon.ir/pS5C1
4 http://yon.ir/y7dO
5 http://iranwithoutlandmines.org/

officials at Iran's Defense Ministry have noted that the main reasons why demining is so difficult are "shortage of necessary equipment, topography of contaminated lands, and lack of maps showing mined areas."[6]

Unfortunately, Islamic Republic of Iran is alone in its struggle to remove mines from its territory and is doing this without any help from international bodies. Head of Iran's Demining Center took such international bodies to task on April 4, 2017, which marked the UN International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. He noted that Islamic Republic of Iran had received no advanced equipment from other countries in its demining drive.[7]

**Recommendations:**

Being seriously concerned with the situation of border civilians, including children, who lose their life and health in land blasts, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) offers the following recommendations:

1. ODVV calls on the human rights council the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health to invite the developed countries to offer the necessary technical support to Islamic Republic of Iran to remove the contaminated lands from landmines.
2. ODVV calls on the neighboring countries responsible for planting the mines to take the responsibility of demining the region too and cooperate with Islamic Republic of Iran in this process.
3. Islamic Republic of Iran has been deprived of IMZMA demining software due to the economic sanctions. ODVV holds the sanctioning countries responsible for the deaths and injuries of mine victims and calls on the countries to offer the victims with adequate compensation.
4. ODVV calls on all countries of the Middle East to join CCW (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) in order to prevent mind blast incidents in the future.
5. ODVV calls on all regional NGOs, concerned with landmines to cooperate with CMC (Cluster Munitions Coalition) in order to help collect land mines and prevent further mine casualties.

6 http://iranwithoutlandmines.org/?p=93

7 http://iranwithoutlandmines.org/?p=93